

Learning To Breathe

Considine, Michael J; Diaz-Vivancos, Pedro; Kerchev, Pavel; Signorelli, Santiago; Agudelo-Romero, Patricia; Gibbs, Daniel J; Foyer, Christine H

DOI:

[10.1016/j.tplants.2016.11.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tplants.2016.11.013)

License:

Creative Commons: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Considine, MJ, Diaz-Vivancos, P, Kerchev, P, Signorelli, S, Agudelo-Romero, P, Gibbs, DJ & Foyer, CH 2016, 'Learning To Breathe: Developmental Phase Transitions in Oxygen Status', *Trends in Plant Science*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tplants.2016.11.013>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

Publisher Rights Statement:

Checked 6/1/2017

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

Learning to breathe: developmental phase transitions in oxygen status

Michael J Considine^{1,2,3*}, Pedro Diaz-Vivancos⁴, Pavel Kerchev⁵, Santiago Signorelli⁶,
Patricia Agudelo-Romero⁷, Daniel J Gibbs⁸, Christine H Foyer^{1,3}

¹ The UWA Institute of Agriculture, The University of Western Australia, Perth, 6009,
Australia

² Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia, South Perth, 6151, Australia

³ Centre for Plant Sciences, School of Biology, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS29JT, United
Kingdom

⁴ Group of Fruit Biotechnology, Department of Plant Breeding, CEBAS-CSIC, Campus
Universitario de Espinardo, Murcia 30100, Spain

⁵ VIB Department of Plant Systems Biology, University of Gent Technologiepark 927, Gent,
9052 Belgium

⁶ The School of Plant Biology, The University of Western Australia, Perth, 6009, Australia

⁷ ARC Centre of Excellence in Plant Energy Biology, The University of Western Australia,
Perth, 6009, Australia

⁸ School of Biosciences, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, B15 2TT, United Kingdom

*Correspondence: michael.considine@uwa.edu.au

Key words. Oxygen tension, ROS/ RNS, N-end rule proteolysis, Redox, Development,
Differentiation

25 **Abstract (100 words)**

26 Plants are developmentally disposed to considerable changes in oxygen availability, yet our
27 understanding of the importance of hypoxia is almost entirely limited to stress biology.
28 Differential patterns of the abundance of oxygen, nitric oxide (NO) and reactive oxygen
29 species (ROS), and redox potential occur in organs and meristems, and examples are
30 emerging in the literature of mechanistic relationships of these to development. Here, we
31 describe the convergence of these cues in meristematic and reproductive tissues, and discuss
32 the evidence for regulated hypoxic niches, within which oxygen-, ROS-, NO- and redox-
33 dependent signalling curate developmental transitions in plants.

The nature of developmental hypoxia and metabolism

Molecular oxygen is essential for efficient production of ATP through oxidative phosphorylation, serving as the terminal electron acceptor for the mitochondrial electron transport chain. Oxygen and reduction-oxidation (redox) biochemistry pervades cellular metabolism and signalling in plants, as in all aerobic life forms. Yet even in optimal growth conditions, various higher plant tissues such as seeds, tubers and buds reside in a state of low oxygen status [1-3]. Internal oxygen concentrations in such organs range from 1 to 50 μM , compared with an air-saturated concentration of *ca.* 260 μM (*cf.* 21 kPa O_2 partial pressure at standard atmosphere and pressure), and this is reflected in the spatial patterns of metabolic control, energy status and gene expression, particularly anaerobic glycolysis [1, 4, 5]. Despite the fundamental metabolic importance of oxygen, our knowledge of oxygen as a curator of growth, differentiation and reproduction in plants is only beginning to emerge. Increasing evidence points to the presence of regulated hypoxic niches during plant development.

Until recently, oxygen signalling in plants was defined by the consequences of oxygen metabolism, such as changes in energy status, production of reactive oxygen and nitrogen species (ROS, RNS), or the accompanying dynamics of the redox network. By contrast, the basic mammalian hypoxia (low-oxygen) signalling and transduction pathways were defined over 20 years ago [6]. It is now widely accepted that local tissue hypoxia plays a central role in mammalian embryogenesis [7] and constitutes a key regulatory feature of adult stem cell niches [8]. The prevailing model applied to mammalian tissues and stem cells is that low oxygen provides a protective environment, conducive to quiescence, low ROS, and a relatively reduced redox state, all of which promote genome stability [9]. Regulated ROS synthesis in mammalian stem cells is central to the transition to proliferation and differentiation.

59

60 Parallel research programs in 2011 provided a step change in our understanding of oxygen
61 signalling in plants, defining an oxygen-dependent N-end rule of proteolysis (discussed
62 further below) [10, 11; see **Box 1**]. Nevertheless, research on N-end rule signalling in plants
63 to date has been largely undertaken in the context of stress, particularly waterlogging and
64 flooding [12, 13]. Thus the current state of the art of developmental oxygen signalling in
65 plants is constrained by the ability to relate stress signalling via the N-end rule to the
66 developmental understanding via redox and energy signalling (see Outstanding Questions).
67 We discuss the roles of hypoxia in plant development and the nexus between oxygen, ROS,
68 nitric oxide (NO) and redox cues. We consider the differential patterns of these cues within
69 organs and meristems, and the evidence suggesting that hypoxic niches are central to
70 meristem function and differentiation in plants. In this context we highlight particular
71 examples from the recent literature on seeds, seedlings and anthers that illustrate functional
72 roles for oxygen status in developmental transitions, in partnership with ROS, RNS and redox
73 status.

74

75 **Gradients in oxygen, ROS, NO and redox potential in organs and meristems**

76 During evolution, the formation of niches and gradients in oxygen and redox status were
77 important forces shaping multicellular life [14]. Cell identity within multicellular organisms
78 became a critical factor in determining sensitivity to cellular cues including ROS and RNS
79 such as NO. The presence of pockets of cells with a low oxygen status is a prominent feature
80 of many developing, reproductive and quiescent plant tissues (**Fig. 1**). These areas can form
81 when oxygen diffusion fails to keep pace with aerobic respiration or when the oxygen supply
82 is occluded by cell wall modifications, such as the deposition of callose. Within hypoxic

83 niches, ROS appear to function alongside NO, phytoglobins and plant hormones to regulate
84 developmental events such as growth, flowering and wood formation [15].

85
86 Hypoxia may be defined as a condition in which the cellular availability of oxygen is
87 insufficient to support oxidative phosphorylation at full capacity. Glycolytic activity is
88 increased to supply ATP in cells experiencing low oxygen availability and fermentation is
89 induced to recycle pyridine nucleotides, in a response known as the Pasteur Effect. Hypoxia
90 is characterised by specific transcriptional programs that are induced and maintained in
91 response to perception of reduced oxygen availability [12, 13]. Oxygen-limited metabolism
92 triggers the expression of specific set of hypoxia-related genes, such as those encoding
93 sucrose synthase and alcohol dehydrogenase, and leads to remobilisation of carbohydrates to
94 meet the increased glycolytic demand. These conserved transcriptional and metabolic
95 responses are seen across life forms [16]. Survival and release from hypoxia is
96 developmentally programmed to enable effective phase transition from quiescence to active
97 metabolism. By contrast, survival through stress-induced hypoxia thereafter is much less
98 certain. For example, an auxin-induced oxidative state defines the root stem cell niche
99 without risk of programmed cell death [17], while hypoxia resulting from abiotic stress sees a
100 persistent increase in ROS production that is frequently associated with impaired cell
101 function and death [18]. The parallel with mammalian stem cells is tempting to consider [19],
102 where glycolysis predominates and ROS homeostasis defines the balance of quiescence,
103 proliferation and differentiation. Mitochondria in mammalian stem cells appear to fulfil
104 different roles in maintaining cell integrity [20]. It is interesting to consider how such
105 findings may translate to plant development (see Outstanding Questions).

The patterns shown in **Box 2**, particularly tissue oxygen status, may be organ- and species-specific. In the root, oxygen profiles may be influenced by the cortical gas space, surface area to volume ratio, depth below the soil surface and experimental system, such as embedding within versus above agar, and the presence of light. The presence of surface water films and root hairs will likely reduce radial oxygen diffusion into the root, reinforcing the polar oxygen gradient. Species differences will also be significant [21]; for example, maize roots have significant amounts of cortical gas space, whereas pea and *Arabidopsis* roots have little. Nevertheless, current data point to a convergence of polar and radial oxygen gradients to a hypoxic condition in the cells of quiescent centre (QC) and stem cells of roots. Mugnai *et al.* [22] demonstrated considerable induction of alcohol dehydrogenase and pyruvate decarboxylase activities in whole *Arabidopsis* roots only when the meristem was exposed to hypoxia, and that respiratory demand was greatest at the proximal region of the meristem. It should be noted however, that there is no obvious signature of hypoxia in the transcripts enriched in the QC of *Arabidopsis* roots, with exception that one of the hypoxia-inducible Group VII ethylene response factors (ERFVIIIs), discussed below was enriched in the QC [23]. Patterns in ROS and NO in the root apical meristem appear to be highly specific to developmental state, as is also the case in a typical seed (**Fig. 2**). The known functions of ROS and NO in roots and seeds are discussed in subsequent sections. Meanwhile, the state in the shoot apical meristem is less clear, confounded by technical challenges identifying the meristem proper and combining this with available resolution of technologies (see Outstanding Questions) [24]. Hence, while current evidence suggest gradients in tissue oxygen status converge to a hypoxic state in the vital tissues such as the QC and stem cells of roots, more mechanistic evidence is required from other organs and in a range of conditions. Nevertheless, these features point to a potentially important role for oxygen-, ROS- and NO-dependent signalling during plant development.

The N-end rule of proteolysis in a developmental context

Responses to hypoxia in animals are mediated by the hypoxia-inducible factor (HIF1 α) transcription factor; oxygen-dependent modification of HIF1 α by prolyl hydroxylases initiates its degradation via the proteasome, whilst decreased oxygen levels lead to its accumulation and a concomitant induction of the hypoxic transcriptome [6]. A functionally analogous, but qualitatively different, protein degradation-based mechanism for sensing oxygen also exists in plants, where ERFVIIIs act as ‘master regulators’ of hypoxia responsive gene expression [13, 25]. Under normoxic conditions, ERFVIIIs are degraded in an oxygen- and ‘NO-dependent manner via the N-end rule pathway of targeted proteolysis (see **Box 1**), whilst a small stable subpopulation localises to the plasma membrane [10, 11, 26, 27]. Under hypoxia, ERFVIIIs localise to nucleus, where newly synthesised ERFVIIIs also accumulate, to activate gene expression. These nuclear ERFVIIIs are then rapidly destroyed upon re-oxygenation, which quickly dampens the hypoxic transcriptional response, providing the cell with a sensitive mechanism for directly adjusting transcription relative to oxygen availability. ERFVIIIs regulate the expression of over half of the ‘core 49’ hypoxia induced genes that are activated and preferentially translated across cell types when oxygen is depleted [16, 26, 28, 29]. These include genes associated with glycolysis and ethanol fermentation, various transcription factors, and genes coding for proteins of unknown function that likely contribute to cellular homeostasis under oxygen deficiency.

There is mounting evidence that oxygen- and ‘NO-dependent ERFVII regulation by the N-end rule pathway is important for coordinating responses during developmentally-imposed hypoxia and the transition to oxygen-replete conditions, in addition to stress. The examples of seed dormancy, germination and photomorphogenesis are described in subsequent sections

and **Figure 2**. In addition, it has previously been shown that loss of function mutants for several enzymatic components for N-end rule pathway display aberrant phenotypes relating to leaf and shoot development and the timing of leaf senescence [30, 31]. This finding could implicate roles for oxygen and NO in the control of development and senescence processes. However, the oxygen/NO-dependent branch of the N-end rule pathway only provides these enzymes with a subset of their substrates, and the relevant targets need to be identified in order to establish a firm link to regulation by oxygen and/or NO levels. It is also interesting to consider that under hypoxia, several genes are induced that attenuate ERFVII activity, providing feedback mechanisms to fine tune the response [32, 33]. This includes the plant cysteine oxidases, which are critical for oxygen-dependent ERFVII destruction (**Box 1**), and the trihelix transcription factor HYPOXIA RESPONSIVE ATTENUATOR 1 (HRA1), which negatively regulates the activity of the ERFVII RAP2.12 through direct protein-protein binding [33]. Giuntoli *et al.* [33] demonstrated through histochemical staining that HRA1 is expressed in young growing leaves of the rosette and meristematic regions under non-stressed conditions, and the authors speculated that it may play a role in counterbalancing the extent of the hypoxic transcriptional response in developmental contexts where oxygen availability is reduced. Further analyses are required to confirm such a role for HRA1.

Sources and roles for reactive oxygen and nitrogen species in development

Cellular energy metabolism employs reductive anabolic reactions to store energy, and oxidative catabolic reactions to release energy. While oxygenic photosynthesis and respiration operate four-electron exchange mechanisms between oxygen and water, without release of partially reduced intermediates, many enzymes catalyse partial oxygen reduction producing superoxide ($O_2^{\cdot-}$) and hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2). Consequently, ROS levels are intrinsically linked to oxygen availability, and therefore constitute important components of

oxygen and hypoxia signalling. These and other redox signals have become integrated in every aspect of plant biology and are crucial regulators of pre- and post-translational gene expression, cell division and expansion, and cell defence, morphology, and fate [34]. Within this context, cellular antioxidants not only determine the extent of ROS accumulation in the different compartments of the plant cell but they also can act as signal transmitters. The intracellular compartments that are major ROS producers show substantial plasticity in organelle shape, with extensions such as stromules, peroxules and matrixules playing crucial roles in inter-organelle communication [35]. For example, ROS accumulation triggers direct stromule-nucleus communication that facilitates direct transfer of oxidants and proteins [36]. The sensitivity of different tissues and organs to ROS accumulation, and to oxidation, is regulated to a large extent by the abundance and intracellular distribution of low molecular weight antioxidants such as glutathione and ascorbate [34]. Antioxidant enzymes and redox-sensitive proteins also calibrate tissue sensitivity to redox signalling appropriate to the conditions.

The major sites of intracellular ROS production in plants are the chloroplasts, mitochondria and peroxisomes [37]. Direct electron transfer to oxygen occurs during photosynthesis and respiration leading to O_2^- production [38]. O_2^- is converted to H_2O_2 by superoxide dismutase (SOD) [39]. In peroxisomes, ROS are produced by a number of different oxidases including glycolate oxidase and xanthine oxidase and through β -oxidation of fatty acids. In addition, ROS are produced in the apoplast by different enzymes including: the plasma membrane-bound NADPH-oxidases (RBOH); class III secretory plant peroxidases; amine oxidases such as polyamines oxidases (PAO); germin-like oxalate oxidases, and; quinone reductases [40]. Of these, RBOH-mediated ROS production has been linked to signal transduction pathways that mediate plant cell growth and development [41]. For example, tip growth in pollen tubes

and root hairs is regulated by ROS-mediated cell wall loosening and stiffening [42]. PAO has also been associated with pollen tube extension by promoting Ca^{2+} influx followed by RBOH activation [42, 43]. Apoplastic H_2O_2 also regulates cell division and expansion during leaf development, where a MYB-like transcription factor KUA1 represses peroxidase expression during cell expansion [44].

ROS production and redox homeostasis are considered to play key roles in root [45] and shoot [24] meristem development. A mechanistic relationship between ROS localisation and cell identity in the root was determined by Tsukagoshi *et al.* (see **Box 2**) [46]. There, the UPBEAT1 transcription factor, expressed in the extension and differentiation zones, represses peroxidase activity, moderating the balance of H_2O_2 and O_2^- in the differentiation and meristem zones, independent of the auxin gradient [46]. NO also appears to be required to maintain root meristem cell identity, as dependent on the auxin gradient [47], and two recent studies pointed to the importance of mitochondrial ROS homeostasis in cell-specific signalling, determining the identity of the root distal stem cells [48], and the maintenance of the shoot apical meristem [49]. These conclusions are in line with the general consensus that redox regulation is involved in multiple processes related to self-renewal and differentiation. Nevertheless, caution must be used when interpreting some of these approaches [50]. There also remains debate on the oxidation state and ROS synthesis in the cells of the root QC. In maize, current data show the QC cells are maintained in a highly oxidised state, and where oxidation of the core redox buffers ascorbate and glutathione is functionally related to the polar auxin gradient, interacting with hormonal and transcriptional controls [17, 51-53]. More recently in *Arabidopsis*, the redox potential in the medial plane of the root was shown to be most reduced in the area of QC and stem cells [54]. These data are in line with the enrichment of genes encoding enzymes leading to or requiring glutathione in the QC of

Arabidopsis [23]. There is a need to resolve the basis of these differences, whether genetic, physiological or due to the experimental system. Moreover, no signal study to date has investigated each of the oxygen-dependent cues in one system.

Mitochondrial plasticity in relation to oxygen availability

It is implicit that considerable adjustment of mitochondrial metabolism is required to ensure that energy metabolism is sustained under hypoxia. Respiratory electron transport generates ROS as an inevitable consequence of oxidative phosphorylation, NO through participation in Hb-NO cyclic respiration (discussed further below), and regenerates pyridine nucleotides to enable continued cytosolic and organelle functions. The importance of mitochondrial ROS homeostasis in the identity and fate of the root- [48] and shoot- apical meristem [49] was introduced above. Accumulating evidence suggests that the availability of oxygen and the requirements of oxidative phosphorylation can alter the composition, numbers and structure of mitochondria. Mitochondrial biogenesis and interdependence with chloroplast during seed germination is illustrated in **Figure 2**. Rice seedlings germinated under anaerobic conditions initially develop a normal mitochondrial structure, but later the mitochondria showed degraded cristae with vesicles [55]. Even within 48h of anoxia, mitochondria had reduced protein levels of tricarboxylic acid cycle components and cytochrome-containing complexes of the respiratory chain, resulting in repressed respiratory functionality [56]. In other tissues, oxygen deprivation can lead to the generation of giant mitochondria, as in *Arabidopsis* leaves [57] and tobacco cells [58]. However, the response of mitochondrial structure to hypoxia may depend on whether cells are in a quiescent or metabolically active state, or whether the experimental context is stress-acclimation or developmental (see Outstanding Questions).

The glutathione redox potentials of root mitochondria have been estimated using ro-GFP. Such measurements showed that root mitochondria were substantially more reduced (*ca.* -360 mV) than the surrounding cytosol (*ca.* -320 mV) of the same tissues [59, 60]. Moreover, mitochondria were found to be much more able to buffer changes in redox state than the cytosol [59]. This is consistent with the observation that mitochondria accumulate more glutathione than any other compartment of plant cells [61]. In contrast to the other cell types in the maize root, the QC cells were found to have little or no glutathione, as discussed above [53]. The mitochondria within this oxidising environment look structurally similar to those in the cells surrounding the QC [62]. However, compared to mitochondria in the adjacent, rapidly dividing cells, the QC mitochondria have much lower tricarboxylic acid cycle enzyme activities, with a much reduced capacity to generate ATP and NADH [62]. A similar situation has been described for potato tuber mitochondria, which reside in very low oxygen environments [63]. Nevertheless, it is not known whether quiescent cells of meristems, including shoot meristems, are specifically hypoxic, and hence whether these features are a consequence of low oxygen or low metabolic requirements for quiescence (see Outstanding Questions).

Phytoglobins and the haemoglobin-nitric oxide cycle under hypoxia

Phytoglobins are also important in the survival in hypoxic conditions that arise during development, and are central to cell fate decisions during embryogenesis, as well as during seed germination, xylem formation, and lateral and adventitious root development [64, 65]. *HAEMOGLOBIN (Hb)1* is a core hypoxia-responsive gene, which is induced by hypoxia alongside NO accumulation [66]. Heterologous expression of *Vitreoscilla Hb* in several plant species led to improved energy status and enhanced growth [67]. The overexpression of *Hb1*

in *Arabidopsis* led to enhanced shoot development [68], and to earlier bolting [69], while silencing of *Hb1* and *Hb2* proved to be lethal [70].

The Hb-NO cycle has been suggested to relieve mitochondrial transport chain inhibition by NO under hypoxia [71]. In the process of Hb-NO cyclic respiration or nitrate-NO respiration, nitrate is first reduced to nitrite by nitrate reductase. Nitrite is then transported from the cytosol to the mitochondria, where it is reduced to NO, via the mitochondrial electron transport chain. NO then diffuses from the mitochondrial matrix to the cytosol, where it is oxidised by Hb [66]. To complete the cycle MetHb is regenerated by a MetHb reductase [72]. In this way, NO accumulation in developmentally hypoxic tissues may be controlled by the non-symbiotic Hbs in an NADH-coupled reaction, while facilitating respiration and ATP production.

Hypoxia and re-oxygenation during plant development

Regulated hypoxia and re-oxygenation have recently been shown to play a critical role in non-stress-associated plant development. Here we highlight particular examples as case studies: seed germination and bud burst, photomorphogenesis and anther development, to illustrate roles for oxygen availability, and related ROS/ RNS levels, in the control of these processes.

Seed germination and bud burst

Seeds and latent buds are spatially complex organs, which transit from quiescence to extension and synthetic growth over a period of hours to days [2, 73]. Prior to germination or bud burst, the organ is hypoxic, $<50 \mu\text{M} [\text{O}_2]$, heterotrophic and desiccated, often $<0.3 \text{ g H}_2\text{O.g DW}^{-1}$ (*cf.* up to $260 \mu\text{M} [\text{O}_2]$, $3\text{--}12 \text{ g H}_2\text{O.g DW}^{-1}$) [74]. Imbibition sees a rapid relief

from desiccation, and gradual relaxation of hypoxia, accompanied by spatiotemporal bursts of ROS and NO (**Fig. 2**). The biogenesis of mitochondria and chloroplast appears to be partially interdependent, with chloroplast metabolism being initially photoheterotrophic, relying on mitochondria to re-oxidise pyridine nucleotides and to sustain the cytosolic and plastid adenylate pools (described in **Fig. 2**) [4]. In the seed, hydration [75] and local oxidation [76, 77] occurs initially within the embryonic axis and peripheral tissues, with synthesis of ROS, principally O_2^- and H_2O_2 , driven by apoplastic peroxidases and NADPH oxidases. During imbibition, ROS appear to function in cell wall elasticity (O_2^- , $\cdot OH$) and cross-linking (H_2O_2), to enable extension growth of the radicle. Genetic analysis of the NADPH/ NADP-thioredoxin reductase/ thioredoxin system also indicates a role for redox regulation of hydrolytic proteins during imbibition and radicle extension, a feature that has been exploited in preventing precocious germination [78]. The rise in internal oxygen is augmented by the restriction of oxidative phosphorylation by partially-nitrite-dependent NO synthesis, which may inhibit complex IV, enabling photosynthetic oxygen to accumulate [79]. NO synthesis is prominent in the peripheral tissues of the seed during imbibition [80], associated with an increase in S-nitrosothiols in the embryo [81]. In the bud, hydration appears to be facilitated by O_2^- -mediated development of protoxylem [2], and degradation of callose occlusions of the plasmodesmata [81]. However, no spatial resolution of RNS in the bursting bud is yet known.

Mechanistic relationships between oxygen- and RNS-dependent signalling and germination have recently emerged, notably the role of NO in attenuating abscisic acid (ABA)-dependent repression of germination. The ERFVII transcription factors are positive regulators of the *ABA INSENSITIVE 5 (ABI5)* transcription factor, which acts downstream of ABA to repress germination [27]. The enhanced degradation of ERFVIIIs during germination, as NO and

oxygen levels rise, attenuates the action of ABI5. Oxygen and NO appear both to be required for the destabilisation of the ERFVIs by the N-end rule pathway [27], while NO/ RNS appear to function to further attenuate ABI5 signalling without direct dependence on oxygen via two further mechanisms. Firstly, NO promotes the degradation of ABI5 during germination by the S-nitrosylation of cysteine-153 [82]. Secondly, tyrosine nitration acts upstream of ABI5 by inactivating the PYR/PYL/RCAR receptor [83], leading to the dephosphorylation of the SUCROSE NONFERMENTING-RELATED KINASE 2 (SnRK2), and thus preventing the activity of this positive regulator of ABI5. Hence by several modes, RNS-dependent modifications enable germination by attenuating ABA-dependent repression. At present, the only direct link to oxygen signalling is via the proteolysis of ERFVIs, however further dissection of these interactions are required.

Anther development

Recent studies have shown that reproductive cell differentiation from pluripotent precursor cells is controlled by hypoxia in developing maize anthers. In contrast to animals, which sequester germ line cells during embryogenesis, the somatic-to-germinal switch in plants is regulated post-embryonically in response to endogenous and environmental cues. Maize anthers develop in tightly encased tassels that undergo short-term transient hypoxia (*ca.* 1.2-1.4 kPa pO_2 , 15-30 μM $[O_2]$) due to diffusion limitation and constraint by non-photosynthetic, rapidly growing leaves with a high metabolic demand [84]. Reduced oxygen availability in the anther lobe triggers the activity of the glutaredoxin MALE STERILE CONVERTED ANTHER 1 (MSCA1) in the central multipotent somatic cells, specifying them as germ initial (archesporial) cells that then enlarge and secrete MULTIPLE ARCHESPORIAL CELLS 1 (MAC1) protein, which represses proliferation and directs the development of surrounding supportive tissues [84, 85]. Analysis of microdissected

archesporial cells revealed gene expression patterns biased towards reduced ROS accumulation, enhanced reductive capacity, and alternative metabolism, indicating that these cells bypass the electron transport chain to limit potentially harmful ROS production and accommodate hypoxia [86]. Intriguingly, artificial manipulation of redox status in developing anthers (using hypoxia or hyperoxia treatments) revealed that every cell has the capacity to develop as a germ cell, suggesting that the natural hypoxic gradient that forms during the early development of this tissue is required for normal spatiotemporal reproductive cell differentiation [84]. Genetic studies in other species also highlight ROS management as an important component of fertility in plants. For example, the *Arabidopsis* glutaredoxin ROXY regulates floral organ and germline development [87], whilst mutants in the rice glutaredoxin MICROSPORELESS1 are male sterile similarly to maize *mcsa1* mutants [88]. Thus, redox status and hypoxia may play a conserved role in the regulation of meiotic fate acquisition.

Photomorphogenesis

Following germination, newly emerged seedlings growing in the dark adopt a skotomorphogenic developmental program, characterised by a rapidly elongating hypocotyl, yellow folded cotyledons and an apical hook [89]. Once exposed to light, photomorphogenesis is induced, where cotyledons expand, hypocotyl growth ceases and mature chloroplasts develop. This growth transition coincides with the initiation of photosynthesis and a congruent production of ROS, which is potentially damaging to the plant. Long-term growth in the dark exacerbates photo-oxidative damage upon light perception, due to accumulation of the chlorophyll precursor protochlorophyllide [90]. Recent work has shown that environmental hypoxia (which frequently occurs in soils) acts as a positive developmental cue for facilitating seedling survival during de-etiolation, particularly following extended darkness [91]. Under low oxygen conditions, stable ERFVIIIs

repress several photomorphogenic traits, restrict chlorophyll biosynthesis and limit protochlorophyllide abundance, which increases the capacity for seedling survival through limiting ROS production upon exposure to light. Accordingly, it was shown that *Arabidopsis* seedlings grown under hypoxia survived much longer periods of skotomorphogenesis than those grown in normoxia [91]. Following emergence, seedlings are typically exposed to atmospheric oxygen levels, and endogenous NO production also increases [92], which collectively would induce ERFVII destabilisation to relieve their repressive function and facilitate the light-induced transition to photomorphogenesis. Thus, hypoxia facilitates seedling survival by coordinating photomorphogenesis.

Concluding statements

Recent insights from root apical meristems, seeds, seedlings and anthers point to a mechanistic function for hypoxic niches and re-oxygenation events during plant development, where the roles of ROS, NO and redox-signalling become paramount in determining the balance of quiescence, proliferation and differentiation. Our summary of these concepts is presented in the diagram in **Figure 1B**. Importantly, it is clear that these cues rarely act in isolation. The combination of more deliberate attention with the use of more sensitive cellular technologies will improve our understanding of how these cues cooperate to effect developmental programming, and at the interface with environmental perception.

Acknowledgements

All authors are grateful to Bill Armstrong for discussion leading to Box 2 and to the reviewers for very useful comment. MC, SS, DG and CHF acknowledge funding by the Australian Research Council (ARC, DP150103211). MC and PA acknowledge funding by the ARC (LP0990355, LP130100347). DG is funded by BBSRC grant BB/M020568. CF

acknowledges funding by the FP7: KBBE-2012-6-311840 (ECOSEED). All authors acknowledge a small writing award from the School of Plant Biology, UWA.

References

1. Borisjuk, L. and Rolletschek, H. (2009) The oxygen status of the developing seed. *New Phytol* 182, 17-30.
2. Meitha, K., *et al.* (2015) Spatio-temporal relief from hypoxia and production of reactive oxygen species during bud burst in grapevine (*Vitis vinifera* L.). *Ann Bot* 116, 703-711.
3. Geigenberger, P., *et al.* (2000) Metabolic activity decreases as an adaptive response to low internal oxygen in growing potato tubers. *Biol Chem* 381, 723-740.
4. Borisjuk, L., *et al.* (2004) Seed development and differentiation: A role for metabolic regulation. *Plant Biol* 6, 375-386.
5. Rolletschek, H., *et al.* (2003) Energy status and its control on embryogenesis of legumes. Embryo photosynthesis contributes to oxygen supply and is coupled to biosynthetic fluxes. *Plant Physiol* 132, 1196-1206.
6. Kaelin, W.G. and Ratcliffe, P.J. (2008) Oxygen sensing by metazoans: The central role of the HIF hydroxylase pathway. *Molec Cell* 30, 393-402.
7. Dunwoodie, S.L. (2009) The role of hypoxia in development of the mammalian embryo. *Dev Cell* 17, 755-773.
8. Mohyeldin, A., *et al.* (2010) Oxygen in stem cell biology: A critical component of the stem cell niche. *Cell Stem Cell* 7, 150-161.
9. Bigarella, C.L., *et al.* (2014) Stem cells and the impact of ROS signaling. *Development* 141, 4206-4218.
10. Gibbs, D.J., *et al.* (2011) Homeostatic response to hypoxia is regulated by the N-end rule pathway in plants. *Nature* 479, 415-418.
11. Licausi, F., *et al.* (2011) Oxygen sensing in plants is mediated by an N-end rule pathway for protein destabilization. *Nature* 479, 419-422.
12. Bailey-Serres, J., *et al.* (2012) Making sense of low oxygen sensing. *Trends Plant Sci* 17, 129-138.
13. Gibbs, D.J., *et al.* (2015) Group VII ethylene response factors coordinate oxygen and nitric oxide signal transduction and stress responses in plants. *Plant Physiol* 169, 23-31.
14. Lyons, T.W., *et al.* (2014) The rise of oxygen in Earth's early ocean and atmosphere. *Nature* 506, 307-315.
15. Sanz, L., *et al.* (2015) Nitric oxide (NO) and phytohormones crosstalk during early plant development. *J Exp Bot* 66, 2857-2868.
16. Mustroph, A., *et al.* (2010) Cross-kingdom comparison of transcriptomic adjustments to low-oxygen stress highlights conserved and plant-specific responses. *Plant Physiol* 152, 1484-1500.
17. Jiang, K. and Feldman, L.J. (2005) Regulation of root apical meristem development. *Annu Rev Cell Dev Biol* 21, 485-509.
18. Blokhina, O., *et al.* (2003) Antioxidants, oxidative damage and oxygen deprivation stress: a review. *Ann Bot* 91, 179-194.
19. Turner, J., *et al.* (2014) Metabolic profiling and flux analysis of MEL-2 human embryonic stem cells during exponential growth at physiological and atmospheric oxygen concentrations. *PLoS ONE* 9, e112757.
20. Folmes, C.D.L., *et al.* (2016) Mitochondria in pluripotent stem cells: stemness regulators and disease targets. *Curr Opin Genet Dev* 38, 1-7.

- 452 21. Armstrong, B. and Armstrong, J. (2014) Plant internal oxygen transport (diffusion and
453 convection) and measuring and modelling oxygen gradients. In *Low-Oxygen Stress in Plants*
454 (Van Dongen, J. and Licausi, F., eds), pp. 267-297.
- 455 22. Mugnai, S., *et al.* (2012) Local root apex hypoxia induces NO-mediated hypoxic acclimation
456 of the entire root. *Plant Cell Physiol* 53, 912-920.
- 457 23. Nawy, T., *et al.* (2005) Transcriptional profile of the *Arabidopsis* root quiescent center. *Plant*
458 *Cell* 17, 1908-1925.
- 459 24. Schippers, J., *et al.* (2016) Redox regulation in shoot growth, SAM maintenance and
460 flowering. *Curr Opin Plant Biol* 29, 121-128.
- 461 25. van Dongen, J. and Licausi, F. (2015) Oxygen sensing and signaling. *Annu Rev Plant Biol* 66,
462 345-367.
- 463 26. Kosmacz, M., *et al.* (2015) The stability and nuclear localization of the transcription factor
464 RAP2.12 are dynamically regulated by oxygen concentration. *Plant Cell Environ* 38, 1094-
465 1103.
- 466 27. Gibbs, D.J., *et al.* (2014) Nitric oxide sensing in plants is mediated by proteolytic control of
467 group VII ERF transcription factors. *Mol Cell* 53, 369-379.
- 468 28. Gasch, P., *et al.* (2016) Redundant ERF-VII transcription factors bind to an evolutionarily
469 conserved cis-motif to regulate hypoxia-responsive gene expression in *Arabidopsis*. *Plant*
470 *Cell* 28, 160-180.
- 471 29. Mustroph, A., *et al.* (2009) Profiling translatoemes of discrete cell populations resolves
472 altered cellular priorities during hypoxia in *Arabidopsis*. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* 106, 18843-
473 18848.
- 474 30. Gibbs, D.J., *et al.* (2016) From start to finish: amino-terminal protein modifications as
475 degradation signals in plants. *New Phytol* 211, 1188-1194.
- 476 31. Graciet, E., *et al.* (2009) The N-end rule pathway controls multiple functions during
477 *Arabidopsis* shoot and leaf development. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* 106, 13618-13623.
- 478 32. Weits, D.A., *et al.* (2014) Plant cysteine oxidases control the oxygen-dependent branch of
479 the N-end-rule pathway. *Nat Commun* 5, 3425.
- 480 33. Giuntoli, B., *et al.* (2014) A trihelix DNA binding protein counterbalances hypoxia-responsive
481 transcriptional activation in *Arabidopsis*. *PLoS Biol* 12, e1001950.
- 482 34. Foyer, C.H. and Noctor, G. (2013) Redox signaling in plants. *Antioxid Redox Signal* 18, 2087-
483 2090.
- 484 35. Foyer, C. and Noctor, G. (2007) Shape-shifters building bridges? Stromules, matrixules and
485 metabolite channeling in photorespiration. *Trends Plant Sci* 12, 381-383.
- 486 36. Caplan, J., *et al.* (2015) Chloroplast stromules function during innate immunity. *Dev Cell* 34,
487 45-57.
- 488 37. Foyer, C.H. and Noctor, G. (2003) Redox signalling through chloroplasts and mitochondria in
489 photosynthetic cells. *Physiol Plant* 119, 355-364.
- 490 38. Foyer, C.H. and Noctor, G. (2009) Redox regulation in photosynthetic organisms: signaling,
491 acclimation, and practical implications. *Antioxid Redox Signal* 11, 861-905.
- 492 39. Gechev, T.S., *et al.* (2006) Reactive oxygen species as signals that modulate plant stress
493 responses and programmed cell death. *Bioessays* 28, 1091-1101.
- 494 40. Kärkönen, A. and Kuchitsu, K. (2015) Reactive oxygen species in cell wall metabolism and
495 development in plants. *Phytochem* 112, 22-32.
- 496 41. Considine, M.J. and Foyer, C.H. (2014) Redox regulation of plant development. *Antioxid*
497 *Redox Signal* 21, 1305-1326.
- 498 42. Kaya, H., *et al.* (2014) Ca²⁺-activated reactive oxygen species production by *Arabidopsis*
499 *RbohH* and *RbohJ* is essential for proper pollen tube tip growth. *Plant Cell* 26, 1069-1080.
- 500 43. Wu, J., *et al.* (2010) Spermidine oxidase-derived H₂O₂ regulates pollen plasma membrane
501 hyperpolarization-activated Ca²⁺-permeable channels and pollen tube growth. *Plant J* 63,
502 1042-1053.

503 44. Lu, D., *et al.* (2014) Transcriptional control of ROS homeostasis by KUODA1 regulates cell
504 expansion during leaf development. *Nat Commun* 5, 3767.

505 45. Vernoux, T., *et al.* (2000) The *ROOT MERISTEMLESS1/CADMIUM SENSITIVE2* gene defines a
506 glutathione-dependent pathway involved in initiation and maintenance of cell division
507 during postembryonic root development. *Plant Cell* 12, 97-110.

508 46. Tsukagoshi, H., *et al.* (2010) Transcriptional regulation of ROS controls transition from
509 proliferation to differentiation in the root cell. *Cell* 143, 606-616.

510 47. Sanz, L., *et al.* (2014) Nitric oxide plays a role in stem cell niche homeostasis through its
511 interaction with auxin. *Plant Physiol* 166, 1972-1984.

512 48. Yu, Q., *et al.* (2016) A P-loop NTPase regulates quiescent center cell division and distal stem
513 cell identity through the regulation of ROS homeostasis in *Arabidopsis* root. *PLoS Genet* 12,
514 e1006175.

515 49. Dolzblasz, A., *et al.* (2016) The mitochondrial protease AtFTSH4 safeguards *Arabidopsis*
516 shoot apical meristem function. *Sci Rep* 6, 28315.

517 50. Noctor, G., *et al.* (2016) Oxidative stress and antioxidative systems: recipes for successful
518 data collection and interpretation. *Plant Cell Environ* 39, 1140-1160.

519 51. Dolan, L., *et al.* (1993) Cellular organisation of the *Arabidopsis thaliana* root. *Development*
520 119, 71-84.

521 52. De Tullio, M.C., *et al.* (2010) Redox regulation of root apical meristem organization:
522 Connecting root development to its environment. *Plant Physiol Biochem* 48, 328-336.

523 53. Jiang, K., *et al.* (2003) Quiescent center formation in maize roots is associated with an auxin-
524 regulated oxidizing environment. *Development* 130, 1429-1438.

525 54. Jiang, K., *et al.* (2016) Salt stress affects the redox status of *Arabidopsis* root meristems.
526 *Front Plant Sci* 7, 81.

527 55. Ueda, K. and Tsuji, H. (1971) Ultrastructural changes of organelles in coleoptile cells during
528 anaerobic germination of rice seeds. *Protoplasma* 73, 203-215.

529 56. Howell, K.A., *et al.* (2007) Oxygen initiation of respiration and mitochondrial biogenesis in
530 rice. *J Biol Chem* 282, 15619-15631.

531 57. Jaipargas, E.-A., *et al.* (2015) Mitochondrial pleomorphism in plant cells is driven by contiguous
532 ER dynamics. *Front Plant Sci* 6, 783.

533 58. Van Gestel, K. and Verbelen, J.P. (2002) Giant mitochondria are a response to low oxygen
534 pressure in cells of tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum* L.). *J Exp Bot* 53, 1215-1218.

535 59. Jiang, K., *et al.* (2006) Expression and characterization of a redox-sensing green fluorescent
536 protein (reduction-oxidation-sensitive green fluorescent protein) in *Arabidopsis*. *Plant*
537 *Physiol* 141, 397-403.

538 560. Schwarzlander, M., *et al.* (2008) Confocal imaging of glutathione redox potential in living
539 plant cells. *J Microsc* 231, 299-316.

540 61. Zechmann, B., *et al.* (2008) Subcellular immunocytochemical analysis detects the highest
541 concentrations of glutathione in mitochondria and not in plastids. *J Exp Bot* 59, 4017-4027.

542 62. Jiang, K., *et al.* (2006) A role for mitochondria in the establishment and maintenance of the
543 maize root quiescent center. *Plant Physiol* 140, 1118-1125.

544 63. Geigenberger, P., *et al.* (2000) Metabolic activity decreases as an adaptive response to low
545 internal oxygen in growing potato tubers. *Biol Chem* 20381, 723-740.

546 64. Hill, R.D. (2012) Non-symbiotic haemoglobins—What's happening beyond nitric oxide
547 scavenging? *AoB Plants* doi: 10.1093/aobpla/pls004.

548 65. Huang, S.L., *et al.* (2014) Hemoglobin control of cell survival/death decision regulates *in vitro*
549 plant embryogenesis. *Plant Physiol* 165, 810-825.

550 66. Gupta, K.J., *et al.* (2011) Plant hemoglobins: Important players at the crossroads between
551 oxygen and nitric oxide. *FEBS Lett* 585, 3843-3849.

552 67. Jokipii-Lukkari, S., *et al.* (2009) Intrinsic non-symbiotic and truncated haemoglobins and
553 heterologous *Vitreoscilla* haemoglobin expression in plants. *J Exp Bot* 60, 409-422.

- 554 68. Wang, Y., *et al.* (2011) Manipulation of hemoglobin expression affects *Arabidopsis* shoot
555 organogenesis. *Plant Physiol Biochem* 49, 1108-1116.
- 556 69. Hebelstrup, K.H. and Jensen, E.Ø. (2008) Expression of NO scavenging hemoglobin is
557 involved in the timing of bolting in *Arabidopsis thaliana*. *Planta* 227, 917-927.
- 558 70. Hebelstrup, K.H., *et al.* (2006) Hemoglobin is essential for normal growth of *Arabidopsis*
559 organs. *Physiol Plant* 127, 157-166.
- 560 71. Limami, A.M., *et al.* (2014) Nitrogen metabolism in plants under low oxygen stress. *Planta*
561 239, 531-541.
- 562 72. Igamberdiev, A.U., *et al.* (2006) Nitric oxide scavenging by barley hemoglobin is facilitated by
563 a monodehydroascorbate reductase-mediated ascorbate reduction of methemoglobin.
564 *Planta* 223, 1033-1040.
- 565 73. Bewley, J.D. (1997) Seed germination and dormancy. *Plant Cell* 9, 1055-1066.
- 566 74. Considine, M.J. and Considine, J.A. (2016) Darwin Review: On the language and physiology of
567 dormancy and quiescence in plants. *J Exp Bot* 67, 3189-3203.
- 568 75. Wojtyla, Ł., *et al.* (2006) A comparative study of water distribution, free radical production
569 and activation of antioxidative metabolism in germinating pea seeds. *J Plant Physiol* 163,
570 1207-1220.
- 571 76. Ishibashi, Y., *et al.* (2015) A role for reactive oxygen species produced by NADPH oxidases in
572 the embryo and aleurone cells in barley seed germination. *PLoS ONE* 10, e0143173.
- 573 77. Kranner, I., *et al.* (2010) Extracellular production of reactive oxygen species during seed
574 germination and early seedling growth in *Pisum sativum*. *J Plant Physiol* 167, 805-811.
- 575 78. Liu, C., *et al.* (2016) Reprogramming of seed metabolism facilitates pre-harvest sprouting
576 resistance of wheat. *Sci Rep* 6, 20593.
- 577 79. Benamar, A., *et al.* (2008) Nitrite–nitric oxide control of mitochondrial respiration at the
578 frontier of anoxia. *BBA - Bioenergetics* 1777, 1268-1275.
- 579 80. Bethke, P., *et al.* (2004) Dormancy of *Arabidopsis* seeds and barley grains can be broken by
580 nitric oxide. *Planta* 219, 847-855.
- 581 81. Rinne, P.L.H., *et al.* (2001) The shoot apical meristem restores its symplasmic organization
582 during chilling-induced release from dormancy. *Plant J* 26, 249-264.
- 583 82. Albertos, P., *et al.* (2015) S-nitrosylation triggers ABI5 degradation to promote seed
584 germination and seedling growth. *Nat Commun* 6, 8669.
- 585 83. Castillo, M.-C., *et al.* (2015) Inactivation of PYR/PYL/RCAR ABA receptors by tyrosine
586 nitration may enable rapid inhibition of ABA signaling by nitric oxide in plants. *Sci Signal* 8,
587 ra89.
- 588 84. Kelliher, T. and Walbot, V. (2012) Hypoxia triggers meiotic fate acquisition in maize. *Science*
589 337, 345-348.
- 590 85. Whipple, C. (2012) Defining the plant germ line- nature or nurture? *Science* 337, 301-302.
- 591 86. Kelliher, T. and Walbot, V. (2014) Maize germinal cell initials accommodate hypoxia and
592 precociously express meiotic genes. *Plant J* 77, 639-652.
- 593 87. Xing, S. and Zachgo, S. (2008) *ROXY1* and *ROXY2*, two *Arabidopsis* glutaredoxin genes, are
594 required for anther development. *Plant J* 53, 790-801.
- 595 88. Hong, L., *et al.* (2012) Somatic and reproductive cell development in rice anther is regulated
596 by a putative glutaredoxin. *Plant Cell* 24, 577-588.
- 597 89. Abbas, M., *et al.* (2013) Differential growth at the apical hook: all roads lead to auxin. *Front*
598 *Plant Sci* 4, 441.
- 599 90. Sperling, U., *et al.* (1997) Overexpression of light-dependent PORA or PORB in plants
600 depleted of endogenous POR by far-red light enhances seedling survival in white light and
601 protects against photooxidative damage. *Plant J* 12, 649-658.
- 602 91. Abbas, M., *et al.* (2015) Oxygen sensing coordinates photomorphogenesis to facilitate
603 seedling survival. *Curr Biol* 25, 1483-1488.

92. Melo, N.K., *et al.* (2016) Nitric oxide, ethylene and auxin crosstalk mediates greening and plastid development in deetiolating tomato seedlings. *Plant Physiol* 170, 2278-2294.
93. Cukrov, D., *et al.* (2016) Extreme hypoxic conditions induce selective molecular responses and metabolic reset in detached apple fruit. *Front Plant Sci* 7, 146.
94. Law, S.R., *et al.* (2014) Mitochondrial biogenesis in plants during seed germination. *Mitochondrion* 19, Part B, 214-221.
95. Logan, D.C., *et al.* (2001) Mitochondrial biogenesis during germination in maize embryos. *Plant Physiol* 125, 662-672.
96. Pogson, B.J. and Albrecht, V. (2011) Genetic dissection of chloroplast biogenesis and development: An overview. *Plant Physiol* 155, 1545-1551.
97. Howell, K.A., *et al.* (2006) Ordered assembly of mitochondria during rice germination begins with promitochondrial structures rich in components of the protein import apparatus. *Plant Mol Biol* 60, 201-223.
98. Varshavsky, A. (2011) The N-end rule pathway and regulation by proteolysis. *Protein Sci* 20, 1298-1345.
99. Bachmair, A., *et al.* (1986) *In vivo* half-life of a protein is a function of its amino-terminal residue. *Science* 234, 179-186.
100. Hu, R.G., *et al.* (2005) The N-end rule pathway as a nitric oxide sensor controlling the levels of multiple regulators. *Nature* 437, 981-986.
101. Armstrong, W., *et al.* (1994) Microelectrode and modelling study of oxygen distribution in roots. *Ann Bot* 74, 287-299.
102. Dunand, C., *et al.* (2007) Distribution of superoxide and hydrogen peroxide in *Arabidopsis* root and their influence on root development: possible interaction with peroxidases. *New Phytol* 174, 332-341.

Text boxes and Figure legends

Figure 1. Demonstrated and hypothetical gradients in tissue oxygen and redox status in plant developmental phase transitions. A. Axillary bud burst and anther meiosis are developmentally augmented by oxygenation and hypoxia respectively [2, 84]. Cell identity and fate, and organ polarity of the root apical meristem (RAM) are governed by differential patterns in ROS, NO and gradients in oxygen status and redox potential (see **Box 2**). We hypothesise these cues are functionally relevant in the shoot apical meristem (SAM). Climacteric-type fruit ripen with a rapid burst of respiration, resulting in hypoxia-driven transcription [93]. Germination and the skoto-photomorphogenic transition are detailed in **Figure 2. B.** Accumulating evidence has highlighted the key functions of ROS and NO in defining the balance of plant cell proliferation and differentiation. In addition, recent evidence suggests hypoxia plays an important role in the maintenance of quiescence in plants, as it does in animals, by constraining oxidative metabolism and stabilising transcription factors [9, 12, 25, 74]. In the accompanying model we illustrate how tissue oxygen status might influence the balance between quiescence, proliferation and differentiation via regulated stabilisation/ destabilisation of N-end rule transcription factors, and influencing the cellular redox poise, and specifically through the differential generation of ROS species and NO. We consider that mitochondria and plasma membrane-bound NADPH-oxidases (RBOH), together with peroxidases (POX) are particularly important in regulating specific ROS expression and the cellular redox poise in this context. Rights for photographic images were purchased from www.shutterstock.com.

Figure 2. Typical spatiotemporal profiles of internal oxygen [O₂], ROS and NO during seed imbibition and germination, and biogenesis of plastids and mitochondria during

imbibition through to de-etiolation. Quiescent seeds are hypoxic, and plastids and mitochondria are prototypical, with poorly developed inner membranes [94-96]. During imbibition, hypoxia is gradually relieved, while ROS play a role in radicle extension, NO plays a role in activating hydrolytic activities in the endosperm. Plastids differentiate to etioplast, characterised by a prolamellar body (PLB) and prothylakoid membranes [Pth; 96]. Mitochondria rapidly develop inner membranes (IMM) and cristae, protein import capacity and subsequently a functional electron transport chain [ETC; 94, 95]. Upon exposure to light, plastids have primordial thylakoid membranes (Th) and grana (Gr), and functional photosynthetic apparatus, which is co-dependent on mitochondria [photoheterotrophic; 4]. Here, chloroplast provide oxygen and reducing power (NAD(P)H), which augments oxidative phosphorylation in the mitochondria via external NAD(P)H dehydrogenase (Ext NDH), ETC and ATP synthase (ATPase), which enables recycling of NAD(P)H and P_i for continued photosynthesis [4, 97]. Nitrate-dependent NO serves to partially inhibit oxidative phosphorylation, augmented the increase in internal $[O_2]$ [4, 79]. The progressive switch from Ext NDH to the tricarboxylic acid cycle (TCA) is hypothetical. Absence of arrows between fully functional chloroplasts and mitochondria does not imply absence of relationships.

Box 1. The N-end rule pathway

The eukaryotic N-end rule pathway of proteolysis is a highly conserved branch of the ubiquitin proteasome system that targets proteins for degradation based on their N-terminus [27, 98]. Substrates of the pathway undergo a number of regulated N-terminal processing events to produce an 'N-degron' prior to ubiquitination and destruction. There are two known divisions of the pathway: the Ac/N-end rule targets proteins that have been N-terminally acetylated, whilst the Arg/N-end rule degrades proteins bearing specific unmodified (but post-transcriptionally exposed) hydrophobic or basic N-terminal amino acids [27, 99].

Primary residues of the Arg/N-end rule are directly recognised by specific E3 ligases (Arg/N-recognins), whereas secondary and tertiary residues (including Nt-Cys) must first undergo chemical modification followed by N-terminal arginylation before they are turned over. The Cysteine-branch of the Arg/N-end rule regulates oxygen and NO perception and transduction, through controlling the stability of proteins initiating with the residues Met-Cys [10, 11, 27, 100]. In mammals this includes several RGS proteins, which monitor oxygen availability to coordinate angiogenesis [100]. In plants, the group VII ERF transcription factors (ERFVIIIs) – of which there are five in *Arabidopsis* - have a Met-Cys- N-terminus, embedded in a longer consensus sequence [13]. ERFVIIIs are processed via the N-end rule pathway as such (**Fig. I**):

- (i) Cytoplasmic methionine amino peptidases (MetAPs) cleave Nt-Met.
- (ii) Exposed tertiary Nt-Cys is oxidised to Cys-sulfenic or Cys-sulfonic acid in an oxygen- and NO-dependent manner. In plants this oxidation is catalysed by plant cysteine oxidases (PCOs), which use oxygen as a co-substrate [32]; functionally homologous enzymes in the animal Arg/N-end rule are yet to be identified.
- (iii) Oxidised Nt-Cys functions as a secondary residue of the pathway and likely targeted by Arginyl t-RNA transferase (ATE), which conjugates an arginine molecule to produce Nt-Arg-Cys.
- (iv) Nt-Arg, a primary destabilising residue, can be recognised by the Arg/N-recognin PROTEOLYSIS6 (PRT6), which leads to degradation by the 26S proteasome.

It is through this regulated, condition-dependent control of their stability that the ERFVIIIs function as homeostatic sensors of oxygen and NO availability [10, 11, 27].

(FIGURE IN BOX)

Figure I. Schematic diagram of the major steps in the oxygen/ NO branch of the N-end rule pathway of targeted proteolysis, as described in accompanying text.

Box 2. Differential localisation of ROS and NO in root tissues with respect to oxygen and redox status.

It is worthwhile considering the tissue patterning of the various oxygen-related cues in meristematic tissues. The root apical meristem is a convenient developmental model, for its relative polar and radial simplicity [51]. Even more-so in the context of oxygen and ROS metabolism, due to the lack of light. Oxygen enters the root by inward radial diffusion from the rhizosphere or cortical gas space diffusion from shoot system [101]. Armstrong and colleagues [101] measured and modelled polar and radial patterns of oxygen concentration in maize roots. In **Figure II**, two stylised profiles are shown, representing the modelled (upper) and measured (lower) transect through the proximal meristem [101]. Assuming these are reflective of the range, we see the steep radial gradient towards a minimum of $<10\%$ air-saturated $[\text{O}_2]$, *i.e.* $<25 \mu\text{M} [\text{O}_2]$ or 2 kPa O_2 partial pressure in the vascular tissue. Although not shown here, data from Armstrong *et al.*, [101] clearly demonstrate a strong polar gradient also, whereby more proximal tissues are more oxygenated.

Studies of ROS and NO localisation have demonstrated rather discrete and differential patterns. Hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) is concentrated towards the extension and differentiation zones, particularly the epidermis and vascular tissues, as well as the columella and lateral root cap [46, 102]. By contrast, superoxide ($\text{O}_2^{\cdot -}$) is predominantly localised to the vascular and dermal tissues of the proximal meristem and elongation zone [46, 102]. Although not shown here, both H_2O_2 and $\text{O}_2^{\cdot -}$ were previously found to be more concentrated in the quiescent centre cells (QC) than the proximal meristem [53]. Meanwhile, NO localisation is concentrated towards the cortical and endodermal stem cells [47]. A recent study of redox

status demonstrated a relatively reduced cellular environment in the proximal meristem and columella, including the QC cells [54]. Although only polar data were presented [54], authors indicated there was no evidence of a radial gradient.

We consider variables affecting these findings, such as genetic and experimental conditions in the main text. To date, no single study has examined these data in one system. Nevertheless, taken together these data illustrate the importance of both polar and radial gradients in oxygen status and of tissue-specific localisation of ROS and NO, and potentially redox in the root apical meristem.

(FIGURE IN BOX)

Figure II. Differential tissue distributions of oxygen, ROS, NO and redox potential in a stylised root. Two alternative profiles of an oxygen transect through the proximal meristem (dashed line) are presented; the upper (yellow) line is the modelled profile, the lower (orange) is the measured profile, both interpreted from [101]. The redox profile through a longitudinal plane is interpreted from [54], H₂O₂ (purple) and O₂⁻ (blue) localisation from [46, 102] and NO localisation (green) from [47].